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NOTES
from the Newsroom

By Rebecca A. Petersen
Facets Editor

This month's cover woman is Frankee Oleson, the executive director of the United Way of Story County.

Frankee has been in our sights for several months. When former Facets Editor Frances Wilke and I did some story brainstorming earlier this year, we decided that Frankee should be the focus of a cover story.

We knew that Frankee was an extraordinary leader of her organization. The campaign has met and exceeded its goal since she took the helm in 1999. But what we didn't know was that Frankee has a great story that's led her to this very public position.

Frankee started as a young woman in northeast Iowa hoping to make music her career. That all changed when she met her now husband, Jim. The two musicians followed careers from one coast to the other. They landed back in Iowa and decided that they would make Ames their home. They didn't have jobs, but they knew that they wanted to live here.

Frankee reminds me of the richness of this community. All over town there are fabulous women working hard because they love this community.

And just for fun, next time that you see Frankee, ask her about her night job.

It is with a heavy heart that I write this final column for Facets. By the time this edition publishes, I will have started a new job as public relations and marketing specialist for The Greater Iowa Credit Union.

After six years at The Tribune and one year of active involvement in Facets, I leave knowing that this community is lucky to have people so committed to telling the stories of beautiful, intelligent, funny and fabulous women.

And since the power of the pen is mightier than the sword, here's my Oscar speech. (I'm never one to shy away from dramatic stretches.)

Thank you to: Frances Wilke, for teaching me that Ames is full of wonderful, vibrant women; Heidi Marttila-Losure, for your compassion and reflective writing; Buffy Sue Clatt, for your passion and idea to name this magazine Facets; Linda Oppedal, for your patience and warmth; Brianne Osborn, for your standards of excellence; Jami Rutledge, for teaching me to think before I speak; Debra Atkinson, for always coming through; Nancy Lewis, for your inspiration (Now I can't wait to grow older!); Elsa, for loving pink; and my mother, for making me the woman that I am. ◆

Rebecca A. Petersen

WELCOME TO

Facets

Facet > 1. One of the flat surfaces cut on a gemstone.

2. The particular angle from which something is considered.

FACETS IS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE TRIBUNE

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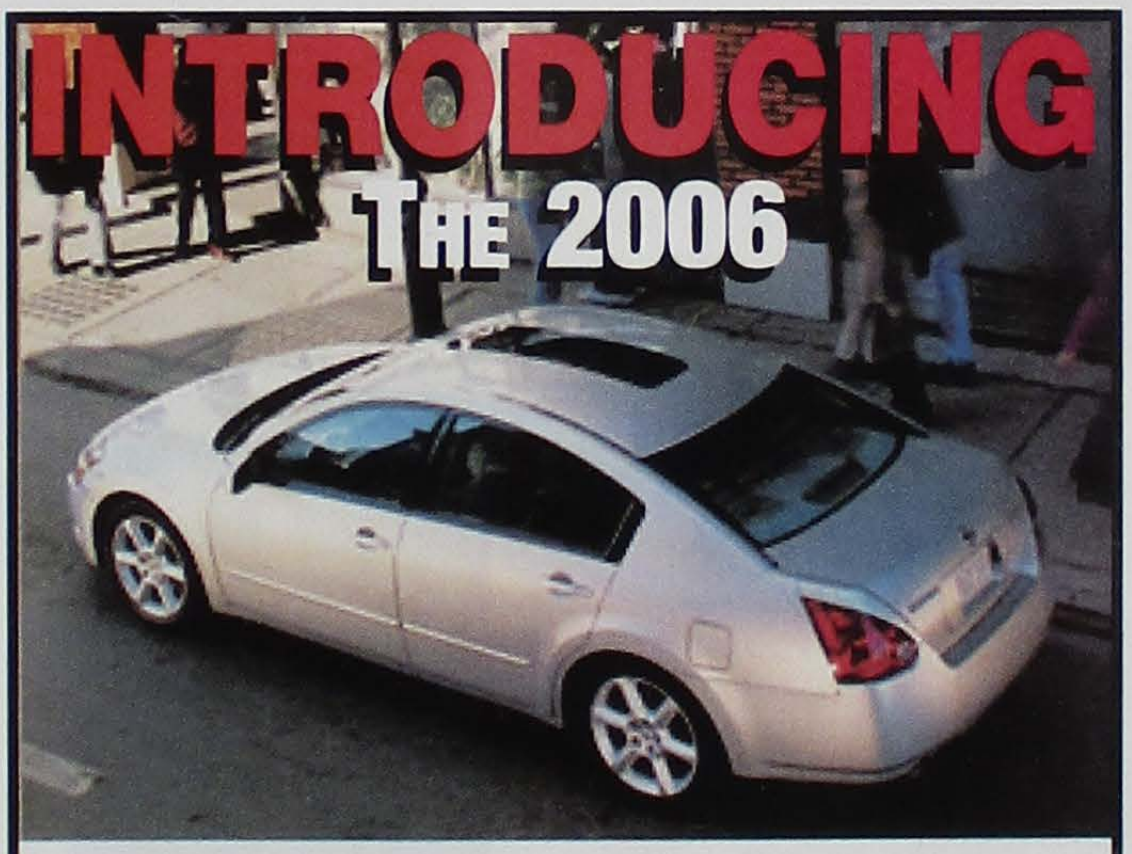
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establishing ROUTINES *for children*

By Malisa Rader



My morning routine goes something like this: After hitting the snooze button a minimum of three times, I leap out of bed, take a quick shower and wake up my children.

My 6-year-old daughter jumps out of bed and plants herself in front of the TV where she tunes out everyone but SpongeBob Squarepants.

My 8-year-old son buries himself under the covers until the absolute last minute.

As the deadline for leaving draws closer, my stress level rises. Actually getting out the door is the hardest part.

"Where's my library book?"

"I can't find my favorite shoes!"

"Do you have money for my field trip?"

Does this remind you of your mornings? When we adults plan our lives (or avoid planning them) we often forget to look at life the way our children see it. From bed to destination, the entire departure is a transition.

Transitions are especially hard for children because there are demands and goals that do not always meet their needs or offer any motivation. Even when children love where they are going, they may prefer to stay in bed until they are ready to get up, sit around in their pajamas until they are ready to get dressed, and eat breakfast when they are hungry.

Adults may feel the same way, but we train ourselves to deny those feelings because we reap an obvious reward such as a positive performance appraisal at work. For children, there is no apparent reward for rushing to leave home. There is no simple solution, but it helps if you establish a routine based on the needs of your child.

Here are some ideas for establishing routines from Eleanor Reynolds, author of "Guiding Young Children: A Child-Centered Approach." It may require some preparation the night before, but it is worth the effort.

Ideas for Establishing Routines

Figure out what is most important to your children in the morning and allow as much time as possible, even if it means waking up 15 minutes early.

Structure the pre-departure events so that they happen at the same time and in the same way every day. Kids are more cooperative when they know what to expect.

Avoid power struggles over non-critical issues. Offer your children reasonable choices without arguing and save any long discussions for the evening.

"Would you like to take your bunny or your bear with us?"

These kinds of questions help your children to think about the day ahead, make mental transitions, and feel like they have some control over their world.

Motivate your children by rewarding them with more of your attention. Read a story, sing songs, or watch part of Thomas the Tank Engine together and create your own morning ritual.

Empathize with your child's needs and desires. "I know that you would rather stay home, so would I. I'll sure miss you."

Make the minutes before you leave memorable – give lots of hugs and kisses so your children have something to remember and smile about until you are together again.

Your child's temperament will play a role in how easily he or she makes transitions. Some children do not adapt to change well and need advance notice with reminders. "We will be leaving in 10 minutes, and everyone needs to have their shoes on and backpacks ready."

Your child may also be more likely to go along with your plans when you explain what is going to happen next. "We need to get ready so that we can visit with Grandma."

By having a routine and planning ahead, you can make the transition from home a less stressful one for your entire family. ◆

Malisa Rader is the parent coordinator for Iowa State University's Child Development Laboratory School.

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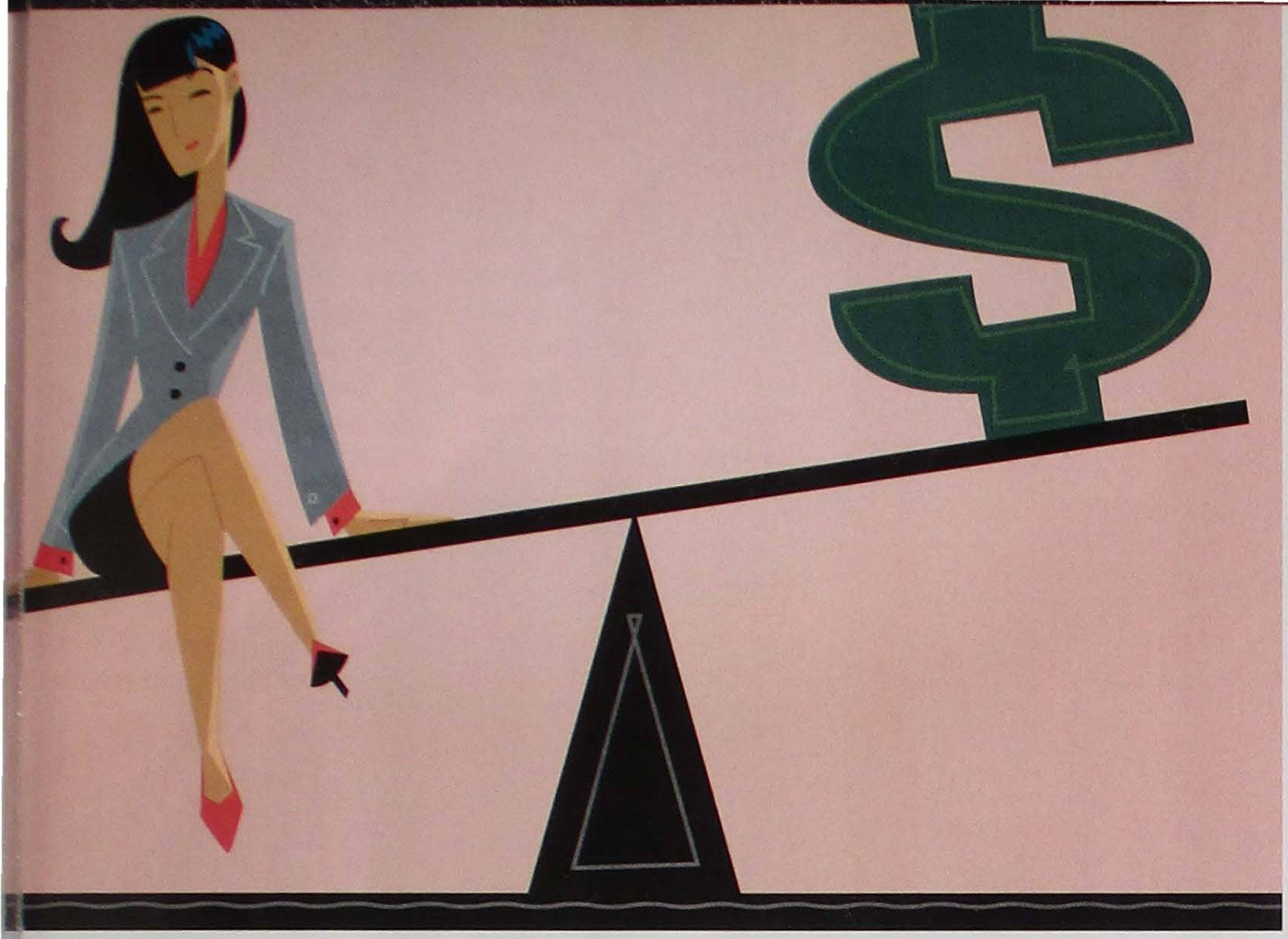
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CHOOSING YOUR BALANCE

By Karen Petersen

Last month I suggested that balance of money, time and energy is essential as we each create our own unique rich life. Like richness, there are many dimensions of balance.

Nutritionists tell us we should eat a balanced diet, which means we can eat almost anything we want, in moderation.

We balance our checkbook, some of us to the penny. For others, close is good enough. Analysts talk about world trade balance, usually a large number. And then a much smaller, but important, number – your credit card balance. There are New Balance shoes. And sometimes we get thrown off balance.

A web search for balance gave me the following definition: A harmonious or satisfying arrangement or proportion of parts or elements, as in a design.

I like the idea of my life being a harmonious design. Of course that means I must purposely design that life. Choices need to be made about how to use time, money and energy to create that rich life. Sometimes the very act of taking the time to think about designing our life is all it takes to begin the process.

And I have come to believe that putting in writing the design and your plan to implement that design is a powerful tool.

Unfortunately it is too easy to say, "Not now, I will have more time later, life is too busy."

I cannot say this strongly enough: Find the time now.

Another way to think about balance is balancing on one foot. This is when the focus is on one part of life. That balancing act may be necessary for short periods of time in our lives. Sometimes people feel noble in that unbalanced position. For some, work is the focus of their time: They spend hours at work, they are indispensable, and no one else can take their place.

If your time and energy are constantly in precarious unbalance, it may be because you have not determined what is really important to you.

Think about the 168 hours we are given each week. If you have a job outside your home, you probably spend 100 hours a week commuting, working and sleeping. What do you do with the other 68? Are you deliberately choosing how you spend those hours?

Sometimes the balance is what's left after everything else is taken away. This is certainly not what any of us would choose for ourselves or our families. Most of us are happiest when we make purposeful choices about how to spend our money, time and energy.

Dan Baker in his book "What Happy People Know" says that according to happiness research, choosing feels better than most anything. People are happiest when they make their own choices. At the top of the list of what makes us happy are autonomy, confidence, competence and self esteem. Money is 10th on the list of what makes us happy.

What do you choose? Think back to yesterday, last week, last month and last year. How did you spend your time? What people were in your life? Where did you go? What gave you joy? What do you want more of in your life? This information will help you decide how you want to allocate your money, time and energy.

Determine how you spend your 168 hours each week. This will tell you how you currently spend your time and energy.

You might wonder why I am focusing on time, happiness and people. What does it have to do with money? It has everything to do with choosing how you spend your money. Money is the means to realize our goals in life. Money is not the goal. Money is just what we use to live a rich life.

Nearly all of us have unlimited wants and limited resources. Sometimes it seems there is not enough money for all our wants and needs. It is often easier to design your rich life than to find the resources to fund it.

Next month I will talk about money choices, choices that you can make to create your rich life.

Thank you for all the great, meaningful comments and questions. Please continue to let me know your experiences and thoughts. Also if you have topics you would like me to consider, I welcome suggestions.

Live a rich life because life is more than money. ◆

Karen L Petersen is a certified financial planner and practitioner Ames. She occasionally teaches financial planning courses at Iowa State University. She can be reached at 232-2785 or karen@MyMoreThanMoney.net.



Driven TO CARE

By Rebecca A. Petersen
Facets Editor

Here's what Frankee Oleson's life could have been like:

After a blazing performance in the bowels of one of New York's theaters, she and other performers would pack up their instruments and head to the famed Sardi's on 44th Street for drinks and a late dinner.

Then it would be cab ride home, buzzing along the streets of midtown, dodging tourists trying to cross against the light. Or maybe a party at a famous director's home, standing on a veranda overlooking Park Avenue.

Oh, the life of the first chair, flute, for a Broadway orchestra.

But then the starry-eyed performer met Jim Oleson. Broadway may be history, but shining is not.

Here's her life nearly 40 years later:

Up at 5 a.m. four times a week to work out with the weight machine, bicycle and free weights. She'll grab a shower and head out to one of those early morning meetings around Story County. If that sounds tiring, it's only maybe 8 a.m. by now. Many of her days continue at the same quick pace.

The work doesn't stop on Saturdays. She's usually in the office, wearing comfortable jeans, singing along with the oldies station – getting prepared for the upcoming week. She doesn't think she works harder than anybody else.

"I choose to do it, because it's a great day to catch up," she said.

That really is the kind of person she is.

Dick Seagrave, a former interim president of Iowa State University and the current chair of United Way's Board of Directors said Oleson has a great mix of compassion and managerial skills.

"The first word that comes to my mind is dedicated," Seagrave said. "I don't think I've met many people, working in social services or non profits that are as dedicated to the mission as Frankee is. In particular, making sure it operates responsibility and efficiently with a great deal of human feeling."

Oleson has been the executive director of the Story County United Way since 1999. In that time, the campaign has grown by 33 percent in the same time that terrorist attacks and repeated natural disasters caused a teetering economy that forced people to make tough choices about auxiliary spending.

"For people who have followed the United Way of Story County and campaign … Frankee has been extremely successful," said Mary Christy, a volunteer and member of the nominations committee that supported Oleson's hiring in 1999.

"We've had an increased campaign every year and we've increased visibility. More people know about United Way, so they're more committed to giving."

Oleson led the organization when it changed its strategy in 2002 to promote the services funded by the campaign – like meals on wheels, the food pantry and childcare - rather than the agencies. That year, United Way surpassed its $1 million benchmark, by more than $40,000.

The fundraising isn't the goal," she said. "It's the means to the goal … have the fundraisers to support the projects."

Oleson's tenure hasn't always been marked by happy headlines. In 2003, Iowa State University faculty brought years of discussions to light by asking administrators to stop promoting the campaign on campus, because United Way funds the Boy Scouts of America, which discriminates against gays. ISU President Greg Geoffroy rejected a faculty senate vote to distance the university from the campaign.

Then in 2004, the organization discovered that one of its own had been embezzling funds. Just this September, a Story County Judge Michael Moon sentenced the organization's former campaign and marketing coordinator, Carol Smalley, to three years probation and 250 hours of community service for stealing $5,753 from the United Way in 37 incidents between August 2002 and November 2004.

Current marketing director, Lynn Scarlett, said Oleson handled the controversy professionally within office walls. Seagrave added that Oleson acted quickly to seek legal and public relations advice, once Smalley was suspected of stealing.

"I say the first word that comes to my mind is very professionally and with a lot of concern with everybody's welfare, including the defendant," he said. "It's serious business and something that we worked hard to rectify as quickly as we could."

Driven, but under the speed limit

Frankee Oleson has lunch with her father, Frank Horn, once a week. Usually, the daughter-and-father duo head to the Tuesday Cyclone Club Luncheon with Oleson's husband, Jim. Horn said that even with his daughter's busy schedule, he gets to share a meal at least once a week.

He is a very proud papa, even though he thinks that she works too much.

"I scold her that she doesn't get enough rest," said Horn, who moved to Ames at the Oleson's urging in 1986. "She's very dedicated and any job she has undertaken; she puts everything into it."

Oleson has been spending more time with dad since her mother died last year. Horn said that Oleson's been good company since losing his wife last October.

Oleson's driven to take her organization to new heights. She plans further work on the county-wide survey that showed a need for an improvement in mental health and public transportation services. Oleson also will give her time to Character Counts, another county-wide issue.

And she'll always find time for lunch with dad. And maybe play another gig with her husband in their band, The Oleson Duo.



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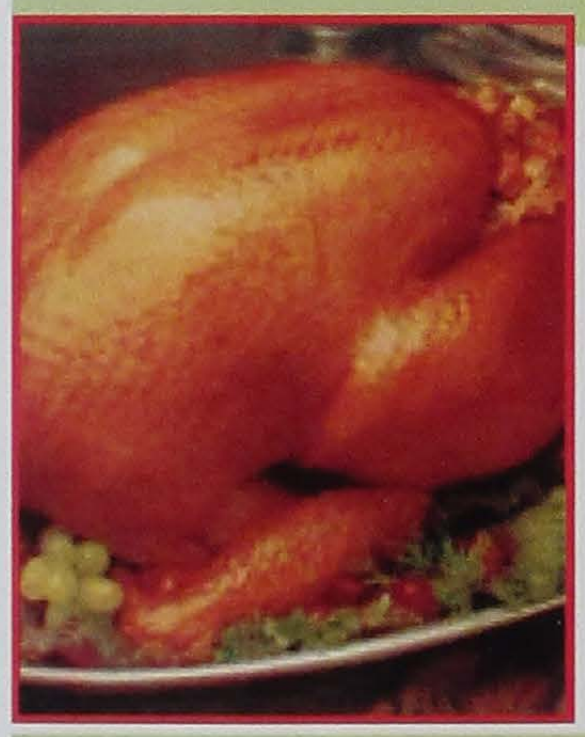


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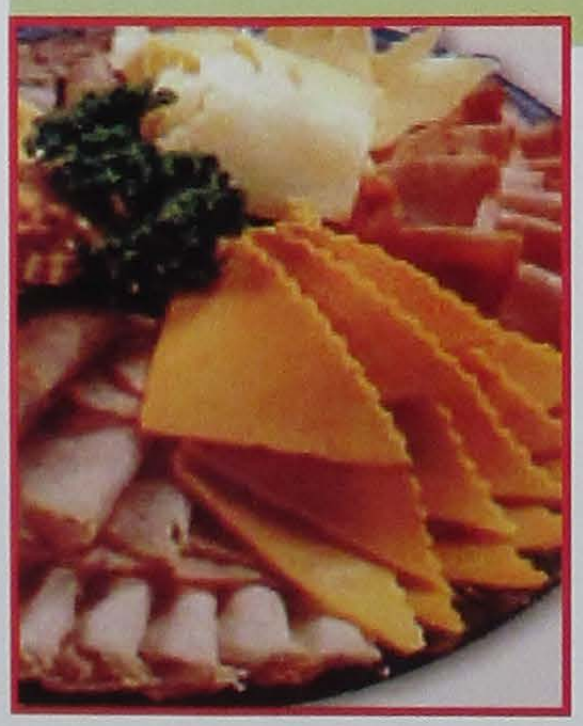


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Tray Sizes:

12 inch 16 inch 18 inch



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Cooked, peeled premium shrimp served with cocktail sauce and fresh lemon.

Tray Sizes:

12 inch 16 inch 18 inch

Brittle Nails

By Kathy Cook

Brittle nails are a common reason patients seek care from a dermatologist.

Approximately 20 percent of the population will develop brittle nails, and women are twice as likely as men to have problems. Brittle nails are not an exact disease state, and the diagnosis is based on patient complaints of inability to grow long nails as well as complaints of soft, dry, weak or easily breakable nails. Changes like transverse or longitudinal splitting and irregular surface of the nail lead us to make a diagnosis of brittle nails.

Healthy-looking nails are important for a well-groomed appearance. There have been several medical studies that have looked at the quality of life in patients with various nail problems. Many suffered embarrassment and also pain due to their nail problems. It is therefore important to have proper diagnosis and treatment for brittle nails.

There are many reasons for brittle nails, including skin diseases such as psoriasis and fungus. Systemic conditions also can cause brittle nails and include problems such as low or high thyroid, iron deficiency anemia, or arthritis to name a few.

Occupations such as household help, nursing and hairdressing are important causes due to the repetitive wetting and drying of the hands which lead to drying of the nails.

Occupational exposure to chemicals can dissolve the natural oils in the nails which lead to drying and splitting. Nail-care cosmetics especially nail enamel removers/solvents, nail hardeners, cuticle removers, and nail procedures like nail wrapping, nail sculpturing, application of premixed acrylic gels and use of manicure tools may damage the nail plate.

Repeated trauma to the fingernail such as typing, telephone dialing and improper nail clipping may cause trauma and damage the nail plate. Nails also become more brittle with age. Just like our skin becomes drier, so do the nails.

There are many therapies that have been tried for brittle nails. One of the most effective has been the use of biotin. If you have noted nail problems, see a dermatologist, the experts in the diagnosis and treatment of skin, hair and nails.

Treatment depends on determining the cause of the brittle nails. Your dermatologist will decide what is best for you. General care will include removing any external factors that decrease nail strength.

A person with brittle nails should not wash hands as frequently, and avoid contact with water or other dehydrating chemicals. Gloves may be helpful to decrease exposure to water. Keeping nails clipped short will minimize trauma.

Clip nails after soaking in lukewarm water and then apply an effective moisturizer, such as one that contains alpha-hydroxy acid. Applying nail enamel once a week will slow water evaporation, but do not remove it frequently because nail-polish removers are drying. ◆

Kathy Cook is a licensed dermatologist and owner of Skin Solutions Dermatology in Ames and Waukee.

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YOUR SAY

ITS THE LITTLE THINGS

By Nancy Lewis

My family has a Thanksgiving tradition. After we've eaten the big dinner, we go around the table and each person tells something he or she is thankful for. Sometimes we only go around once, but most years we go around several times. After the first time, only those who still have more to say speak, so it may come down to two or three people talking, but we continue until everyone has finished.

The things we are thankful for tend to be "big" things, like family, friends, school, jobs, maybe a better car or a larger house. But this year, as I think about my life, I'm finding myself grateful for a lot of "little" things – things I probably wouldn't mention during our family thankfulness time. Here is a sample of what makes my life more comfortable or more pleasant.

I'm grateful for daffodils and other plants that deer and rabbits don't eat, and for help in planting and caring for them. Also, I'm happy to welcome the occasional "volunteer" plant. One unexpected marigold bloomed all summer, and there were daisies in strange places, though some of them I didn't keep. I enjoy the robins, cardinals and blue jays that visit my back yard. Even the squirrels are funny as they chase each other.

Thank you so much to all the people who take care of all the public gardens around town. Also, thanks to everyone who grew coneflowers in the front yards on Grand Avenue; to those who planted and now tend the shrubs and trees north of Ninth Street on Northwestern Avenue (on the railroad property); and to whomever chose and planted the trees on the north side of the St. Cecelia School playground.

We lived on Northwestern Avenue for 35 years, and our backyard was next to the railroad tracks. We got used to the trains, and when we moved I was afraid I'd miss them. So I'm glad that I can still hear the train whistles at night. Also at night, I can sometimes hear the geese on the lakes at Ada Hayden Park. Our present neighborhood is a lot quieter than Northwestern was, and I'm finding that I like the silence.

I delight in paperback books, both for price and for bookshelf space. I'm grateful to the staff of the Ames Public Library who select favorite books for display. Sometimes a staff person suggests an author who has written a lot of books, and I enjoy them all.

I'm dependent on mail delivery and trash collection. I actually do buy things from mail-order catalogs, so I am glad to get them, but also glad that the ones I don't need are taken away and burned to make our electricity.

I like the vast assortment of greeting cards that are available, both to send and to receive. And in retirement, I've become a newspaper junkie, so I'm thankful for The Tribune, the Des Moines Register, and the New York Times.

As I look around our home, I smile at our art prints, copies of works by Frank Stella, David Hockney, Edward Hopper, Andrew Wyeth and Dr. Seuss. Years ago, my sister and her family lived in England, and she was able to do brass rubbings from original church brasses. Four of those decorate our walls. When I read or sew, I appreciate my recliner and a good light. I'm glad for the warm fleece and flannel fabrics that I use to make blankets. Also gift bags and padded mailers make giving presents easier.

I couldn't cook without paper towels, plastic wrap and aluminum foil. I like liquid hand soap. I enjoy baking, but I'm also thankful for meringue cookies that I can buy at the grocery store and for fat-free frozen yogurt.

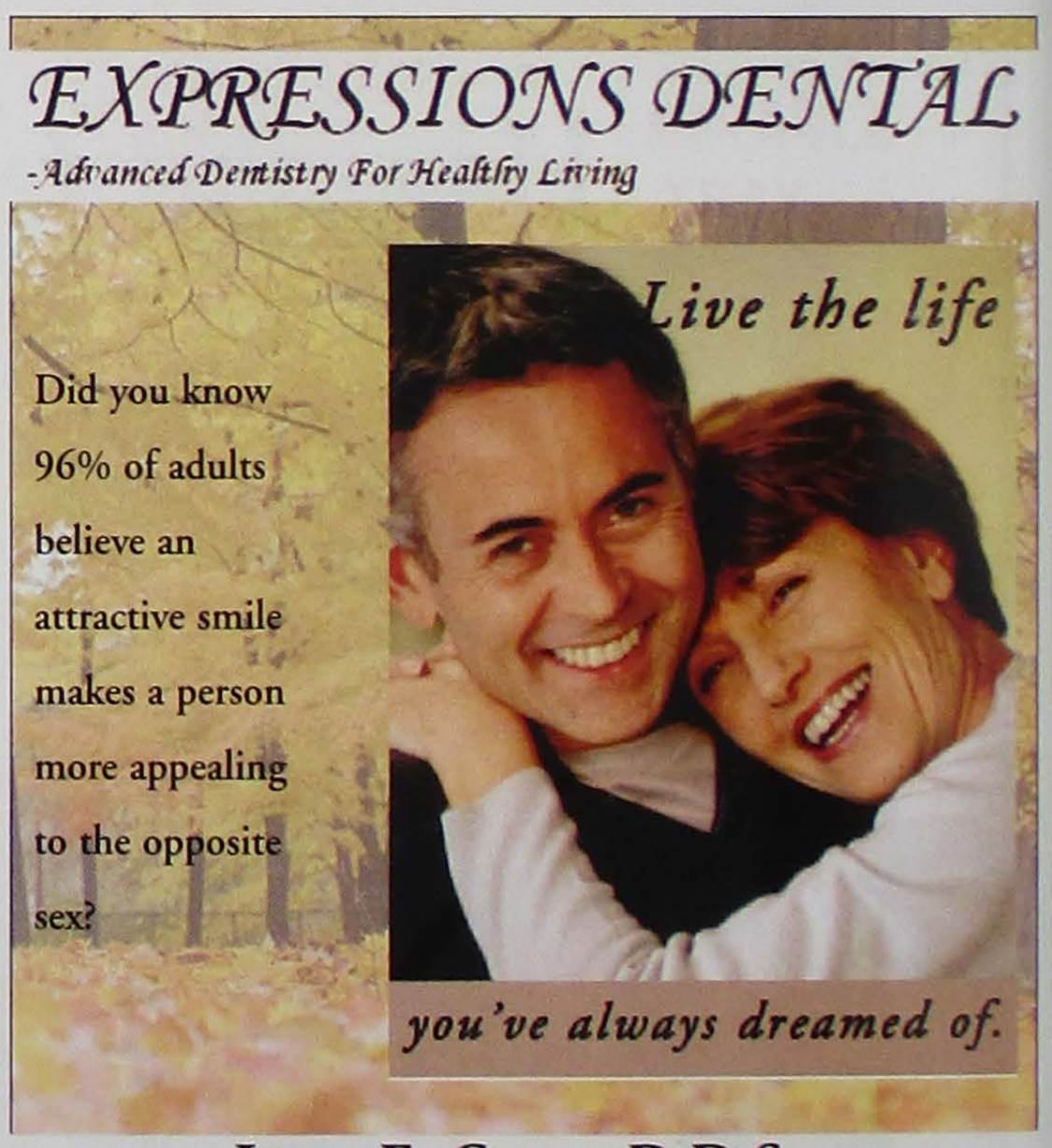
Relaxed-fit clothes with elastic waists simplify my life, as do watches that don't have to be wound. Pants suits are wonderful and so are comfortable shoes. And I'm glad that hats and white gloves are no longer necessary for ladies' lunches.

When I was young, a long-distance telephone call was almost always bad news. Money was scarce, and long distance rates were high. Now long distance calls and e-mail keep us in much closer touch with our children and grandchildren.

Finally, I am grateful for things that have a lot of sentimental meaning. On our dining room wall are the candle sconces that we bought in Williamsburg, Va., in 1964. I have my grandmother's sewing machine and darning egg. My father-in-law made us a wonderful magazine rack, which is still in use. And I have on display the silk roses from my parents' Golden Wedding celebration.

I have a lot to be thankful for.

Nancy Lewis has lived in Ames since 1957. Before retirement, Lewis was a multi-faceted career woman.



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Food BITES

COMFORT FOOD

By Rebecca A. Petersen
Facets Editor



Crinkling leaves and crisp air always motivate me to hit the kitchen and power cook. This time of year is not one for food explorations for me. I'll trade searching for new recipes with unique ingredients for the old standbys. There's no diversity here. Roast beef and chili are my favorites.

So in preparation for November Food Bites, I took a stroll through my recipe box to find some of those favorite comfort foods. Most of the recipes come from my mother, Valerie Sawyer. The hand-written, laminated cards were her wedding gift to me. She is my ultimate cooking mentor. There were very few times that growing up we'd have the same recipe twice in a month. (Except for Friday-night pizza, with cottage cheese, potato chips and milk.)

It's important to note that there is one recipe missing from this list. My husband's grandmother Marge Jay made THE best chili. And despite our family's best attempts, no one can replicate it.

My stepmother Mary Anderson has noted this phenomenon, as she's tried to get her mother, another Marge, to write down some family favorites.

If you do get a recipe and make it yourself, "it doesn't taste the same," my stepmother says.

So, since most of you have never tasted these foods, try them out. You may be disappointed. But I never am!

GARLIC DIP
by Kathleen Sawyer

3-4 ounces cream cheese
1 clove minced garlic
1-2 Tablespoons mayonnaise
2-3 Tablespoons sour cream

Mix well. Chill.

** It seems simple, but is the best dip for all kinds of things.

CHEESY POTATOES
by Sandra Petersen

2 pounds frozen hash browns
1/4 cup melted butter
1/8 teaspoons pepper
2 cans cream of chicken soup
1 pint sour cream
1 ounce shredded cheese
1/2 cup chopped onion
2 cups cornflakes

Combine all in 9 by 13 pan. Mix 1/4 cup melted butter with cornflakes. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes covered. Remove cover and bake additional 15 minutes.

** This dish combines a few of my favorite things: cheese, butter and fat!

GRANDMOTHER PETERSEN'S CHICKEN CASSEROLE,
as adapted by Sandra Petersen

2 cups cooked rice
2 cups cooked chicken
2 cups chopped celery
2 cans cream of chicken soup
1 cup mayonnaise
2 Tablespoons lemon juice
1 can mushrooms

Mix all together in 9x13 pan. Cover and cook for 1 hour at 375 degrees. Uncover and cook additional 15-20 minutes.

MADE-RITES
by Valerie Sawyer

1 1/2 pounds ground beef
1 teaspoon beef bouillon dissolved in 3/4 cup boiling water
1 capful kitchen bouquet
1 can chicken gumbo soup
1 teaspoon minced onion

Brown ground beef, drain fat. Add remaining ingredients. Simmer until thick and serve over fresh buns.

** These are much better than the kind served commercially. Add a thick slice of extra sharp cheddar cheese for an even better sandwich.

MONKEY BREAD
by Valerie Sawyer

4 rolls biscuits
1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
3/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 sticks butter
1 cup brown sugar

Combine cinnamon and sugar. Cut each biscuit in quarters and roll in sugar mixture. Place in greased 9 by 13 pan. Cover and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, bring butter and brown sugar to a boil. Pour over biscuits and bake at 350 degrees for half an hour. Flip upside down on platter. Serve warm.

MARY'S BISCUITS AND GRAVY
by Mary Anderson

1 pound pork sausage
1/2 stick butter
1 cup milk (the greater the fat content, the richer the sauce)
1/2 cup flour (you may need more)
salt
pepper
biscuits (make them from a can; it's easier!)

Brown sausage. Drain on paper towel. In same pan with drippings, melt butter. With a wisk, slowly add flour until a ball forms. While wisking, add milk slowly. Add milk until mixtures reaches a satisfied consistency. Add sausage. Cook on low until bubbly and biscuits are brown!

** I'm the first one ready to jump in the car for a trip to the Cyclone Truck Stop for biscuits and gravy. But Mary's are still the best. Too bad I can't head home for lunch. (It would be a 15-hour drive!)

Most people in my family are dump cooks. They just kind of throw things together and voila, a delicious meal.

I called my stepmother for my two favorite recipes of hers. She struggled to give me exact recipes, since she usually doesn't use them. So, we're doing our best. ◆

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hue & cry

Definition: *Any loud clamor or protest intended to incite others to action.*

Magical moments at the edges of the holidays

By Heidi Marttila-Losure

The time of food and family is nearly upon us again.

I'm certainly looking forward to the food part of the holidays — thoughts of pumpkin pie and gingerbread cookies are already dancing in my head.

But the family gathering aspect of the holidays is just as appealing. I'm looking forward to some of the holiday traditions of my husband's and my families. After a big dinner, the Losure family gets out their instruments for some rousing old-time music, and perhaps later the cards appear for an obscure 1940s game (Some-R-Set) that few beyond their family has ever heard of.

The Marttila family gathers around the piano after a big dinner for some singing, and a round of Scrabble or Rummy-O might follow.

But the more I look back on our holiday celebrations, the more I realize that some of the best memories are of the backstage work of the traditions, or of events that weren't intended to be traditions at all.

As clear as my memories of the wonderful smell and taste of Christmas cookies are, the memories of baking them with my mom and sister are still more vivid. And some of the best holiday conversations have happened not around the dinner table but in the kitchen, as I've learned how to cook a turkey with my mother-in-law, or washed and put away holiday dishes with my dad and aunts.

My husband tells me that one of his best Thanksgivings was spent working out in the cold at his grandparents' farm. Digging a trench in near-frozen ground hadn't been part of the plan that Thanksgiving Day, but a plumbing problem forced the men of the house outside to find and fix a possibly leaking pipe. The work itself was hard, but my husband said working together with his grandfather, father and uncle was a rare and pleasant event.

This kind of gathering, when several generations gather to work on a project together, doesn't take place nearly as often as it used to. People don't live in the same place for generations anymore; as children grow up, they go to where the jobs are, and the jobs often aren't where their parents or grandparents live. Families scatter across the country or even the world, and when getting the family together happens rarely and briefly, spending time working together seems like a waste of precious moments.

The farmer and essayist Wendell Berry paints a beautiful picture of one tradition that still (for the near future, anyway) pulls generations and whole communities together: the tobacco harvest. The work, still done by hand, is some of the hardest he has ever done, he writes, but it is not drudgery, and in fact many of the men and women harvesting take pleasure in the work.

"The tobacco cutting is the most protracted social occasion of our year," he writes. "There is much talk … there is much laughter … and there are memories. … The tobacco cutting is a sort of ritual of remembrance. Old stories are re-told; the dead and the absent are remembered. Some of the best talk I have ever listened to I have heard during these times."

Children often play at the edges of the tobacco fields, pantomiming the work of the adults, Berry writes. And because children are playing, the adults play too sometimes.

When generations work together, children benefit by learning about the place in which they live and their place in it. Their parents benefit because they can be with their children and work at the same time, as well as share their parenting burdens and joys, at least for a short while, with others in the community. Older generations benefit by seeing that their work and wisdom are valued and are being passed down to younger generations.

I'm not recommending starting a work project while turkey and all the trimmings are cooling on the table — holidays are meant to be holy days, after all. But when time with all the generations together happens so rarely nowadays, the holidays also provide an opportunity to enjoy the "mundane" moments at the edges of the traditions, or even the events that threaten to get in the way of them.

When the meal is over, pick up a dish towel; when your grandpa asks for a hand, be there to offer it. The best holiday memories come from moments like these.

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